

NSC BRIEFING

17 June 1954

NSA review completed

INDOCHINA

I. Military picture Tonkin delta area little changed from last week, but Viet Minh readiness for possible large-scale attack believed complete.

A. Most recent National Intelligence Estimate, for period ending 15 July, concludes most likely Viet Minh action will be:

1. Increase delta operations, possibly committing battle corps, to push back French, demoralize Vietnamese and cut LOC Hanoi-Haiphong.

B. French, during this period, will be able:

1. Hold key strong points, keep LOC open part-time.
2. In face major attack, however, might evacuate Hanoi and fall back to Haiphong perimeter, which they could almost certainly hold.

C. Vietnamese political situation will probably continue deteriorate.

D. This week's most interesting evidence of readiness-possibly indicative of plans to attack--

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- 2 -

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E.



two Viet Minh

intelligence companies are operating along
perimeter northeast and northwest of Hanoi; this
could be preliminary to offensive operations.

II. French [redacted] apprehensive of attack but claiming
no conclusive evidence of enemy intent, says enemy has
sufficient supplies stockpiled in rear areas for initial
stages of attack.

A. Nearness of delta to China border would permit
resupply to sustain any large-scale offensive.

B. In this connection, French [redacted] also
has expectations of early increase in Chinese aid
(recently running at rate close to 3,000 tons
per month).

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III. Vietnamese morale, believed important determinant of
enemy course of action, very low.

A. [redacted] desertion rate among
Vietnamese army units and militia in Tonkin delta
at highest rate yet.

B. Prospects of early Viet Minh victory by military
or diplomatic means has lessened already weak

support of Vietnamese government
and army. [redacted] toward its government

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- 3 -

C. [REDACTED] French now can count on loyalty of only three percent of delta villages.

D. Other instances of sagging morale include 11 June mutiny of Vietnamese regular army mobile group stationed in Central Vietnam, widespread rioting last week south of Saigon in protest conscription, and rumored rioting at Vietnamese naval academy.

IV. Meanwhile, Governor Tri of North Vietnam says Ely evasive on French plans for delta regroupment and defense.

A. Tri fears possible evacuation Hanoi, is disturbed over possible French plans to abandon the people of southern areas of delta.

B. Ely's reluctance keep Tri posted on military plans typical uneasy relationship Vietnamese and French officials.

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Approved For Release 2003/08/26 : CIA-RDP80R01443R000200320006-0

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